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C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 000068

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY POLICE CHIEF SHOT TO DEATH

Classified By: DCM Joseph Pennington, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (U) Colonel Gevorg Mherian, a deputy chief of the national police (often still called a deputy minister of internal affairs, though Armenia officially no longer uses that terminology), was shot to death at the entrance of his apartment building on the evening of February 3. Local news reports indicate that Mherian took three gunshot wounds to the head and one to the torso. Mherian was promoted to his current position by President Serzh Sargsian, and had overseen the significant -- seemingly quite successful -- management shake-up of the Office of Passports and Registration (OVIR) aimed at eliminating the rampant corruption in the agency. Mherian had previously worked as a presidential adviser on anti-corruption. Mherian was just 33 years old; his widow is reportedly expecting their fourth child.

12. (C) Local observers were at a loss to explain the killing. Mherian was known by several of our local contacts as a relatively progressive figure within the police, and he has been considered relatively clean. None of our contacts was aware of any particular outside business interests, though one (an NGO leader and Mherian acquaintance, Karen Bekarian) suggested that he "must have" had some kind of outside income, because he was "too clean" as a senior police officer not to have outside income. Bekarian told polchief that Mherian supervised five departments within the police, none of which would be considered line investigative departments, but rather are more administrative and support functions. In addition to OVIR, he supervised the departments of police headquarters operations, personnel, interface with Interpol, and legal document preparation.

13. (C) Bekarian reports that Mherian was viewed as influential within the police organization, beyond his specific departments of responsibility. In the ongoing intragovernmental rivalries between supporters of President Sargsian and ex-President Robert Kocharian, Bekarian said that Mherian was definitely in the Sargsian camp, but nonetheless was able to maintain friendly relations with many who are identified more as Kocharian supporters.

14. (SBU) Mherian had previously worked with USAID program implementer IFES on voter list reforms, as OVIR is the government department charged with maintaining the national voters' registry. IFES found him sometimes hard-headed but otherwise a reasonably constructive partner, with a fairly good reputation.

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